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ABSTRACT

The issue of inclusion has been at the forefront of attention in education, and has been widely discussed and debated. Since teachers will be the primary service deliverers of whatever inclusion practices are adopted, this study was conducted in an attempt better to understand teachers' understanding and perceptions of inclusion. Focus group interviews were used to solicit teachers' views. Subgroups of teachers who were most likely to be directly affected by inclusion practices were targeted: special education teachers (N=25); general education teachers (N=25); Chapter I teachers (N=8); and teachers of the gifted (N=15). Interview results revealed passionate responses from teachers, the majority of whom had strong, negative feelings. Teachers felt that decision-makers were out of touch with classroom realities. They identified factors that would affect the success of inclusion such as class size, inadequate resources, the extent to which all students would benefit, and lack of adequate teacher preparation. Two topics were identified as necessary if inclusion were to be successful--communication among teachers and use of cooperative learning grouping. Informants' responses formed the basis for guidelines to implement school-based inclusion models. (Contains 21 references.) (LL)

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Teachers' Views of Inclusion: "I'd Rather Pump Gas"

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RUNNING HEAD: Teachers' Views

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RUNNING HEAD: Teachers' Views

Abstract

This study's purpose was to better understand teachers' understanding and perceptions of inclusion through the use of focus group interviews. We targeted subgroups of teachers who were most likely to be directly affected by inclusion practices: special education teachers (n=25), general education teachers (n=25), Chapter one teachers (n=8), and teachers of the gifted (n=15). The results of the interviews revealed that the majority of teachers had strong, negative feelings about inclusion and felt that decision makers were out of touch with classroom realities. They identified several factors that would affect the success of inclusion including: class size, inadequate resources, extent to which all students would benefit from inclusion, and lack of adequate teacher preparation.

Teachers' Views of Inclusion: "I'd Rather Pump Gas"

On the heels of the Regular Education Initiative, the issue of inclusion has been at the forefront of attention in education (Fuchs & Fuchs, 1994; Fuchs, Fuchs, & Fernstrom, 1993). Inclusion has created such a furor that it has been the cover story of a weekly news magazine (Shapiro, Loeb, Bowermaster, Wright, Headden, & Toch, 1993), and most local newspapers have featured articles about inclusion practices in their schools (e.g., New York Times, Chira, 1993). Further evidence of the influences of inclusion can be seen in a documentary about an elementary student with Down syndrome who was included in the general education classroom that was awarded an Academy Award for Best Achievement in Documentary Short Subjects in April of 1993.

In response to the public attention that inclusion has received, most professional education organizations have issued a position statement that attempts to interpret the issue of inclusion for their membership. These position statements represent a range of responses that include: a) unqualified enthusiasm for full inclusion (The Association for Persons with Severe Handicaps, 1991), b) concern about inclusion practices not providing appropriate services for students with learning disabilities (Council for Learning Disabilities, April, 1993; Division for Learning Disabilities, 1993; Learning Disabilities Association, March, 1993; National Joint Committee on Learning Disabilities, 1993), c) support for the philosophy of inclusion, but concern for maintaining a continuum of services (Council for

Exceptional Children, 1993; National Association of State Boards of Education, 1992), and d) concerns about the responsibilities of general education teachers and the effects of inclusion on all students (American Federation of Teachers, 993; National Education Association, 1989).

The issue of inclusion has been widely discussed and debated at professional meetings and through professional journals (Fuchs & Fuchs, 1994; Fuchs, Fuchs, & Fernstrom, 1993; McGill-Franzen & Allington, 1991). While a range of perceptions on the issue of inclusion have been aired, the views of classroom teachers are noticeably missing from the public discussion of the topic. Certainly, teachers will be the primary service deliverers of whatever inclusion practices are adopted, thus, their perspectives are essential if we are to anticipate possible difficulties and prepare for successful inclusive practices. The purpose of this study was to better understand teachers' understanding and perceptions of inclusion through the use of focus group interviews.

We were interested in the perceptions of teachers of special education, gifted, and Chapter one students since their roles are likely to change considerably with the implementation of inclusion models. Much of the educational intervention provided by teachers of gifted, special education, and Chapter one students is presently provided through pull-out or self-contained programs. Inclusion would likely alter their service delivery models so that services would be provided within the general

education classroom. We were interested in general education teachers' views since they will be significantly affected by whatever inclusive practices are implemented.

We used focus group interviews as the procedure for soliciting teachers' views. First used as a research tool in communication, marketing, and advertising, the focus group interview is designed to construct a carefully planned discussion to obtain perceptions on a given subject in a permissive and non-threatening environment (Krueger, 1988). The underlying premise of focus group interviews is that individuals are more willing to reveal their true perceptions and feelings within a group involved in discussing a common issue.

There are several reasons why we felt focus group interviews would be highly suited to soliciting teachers' views on inclusion. First, many teachers may not understand inclusion, thus the initial discussion during the focus group could introduce the concept and its meaning to the participants in a nonthreatening way. We felt focus groups would provide a forum where participants could realize that there were other teachers who did not understand the meaning and implications of inclusion, and thus, teachers would feel less constrained about voicing their questions and opinions. Second, we reasoned that for a topic such as inclusion, where many teachers are still considering their position, it would be helpful for them to hear the perceptions of others to assist them in forming their own point of view. We felt that focus group interviews, rather than

individual interviews or surveys, would allow teachers to consider their perceptions by obtaining more information. Third, since inclusion often evokes emotional responses, we felt that focus group interviews would provide a comfortable forum for teachers to express their attitudes and reactions to inclusion and respond to the reactions of other teachers.

Method

Subjects

Subjects were chosen using procedures most frequently used for focus groups; purposive, non-probability, non-randomly selected sampling procedures (Basch, 1987; Chein, 1981; Patton, 1980). A sampling plan was developed to solicit the involvement of individuals willing to participate who represented the targeted groups for the research. Since, by far, the majority of teachers in the target school district were not teaching in inclusive classrooms, teachers were selected to participate who were not teaching in inclusion classrooms.

All participants were recruited from a large metropolitan school district in the Southeastern United States. Researchers identified schools (n=54) that approximateed the student ethnic distribution of the school district which is 17% Caucasian, 35% African American, and 47% Hispanic. Schools were contacted for the purposes of explaining the study and identifying general education, special education, Chapter one, and gifted teachers who would be interested in participating. Twenty-seven elementary, nine middle school, and nine high schools indicated

an interest in the study. With the principals', assistant principals', or department heads' approval, letters were sent to selected teachers' school mailboxes or the teachers received a phone call from the researchers requesting their participation in the study. The letters and phone calls included notification that food would be served during the interview and that ten dollar gift certificates would be distributed upon completion of the interview. These incentives were used to increase participation rates. Interviews were conducted either at one of the teacher's schools, the research site, or a teacher's home during after school hours or on a teacher planning day.

Teachers who consented to participate (n=74) taught a wide range of grades and subjects with the former ranging from kindergarten through twelfth grade and the latter including, Art, Math, Science, and History. Table 1 provides a summary of the descriptive characteristics of the sample of teachers who participated in the focus groups.

Insert Table 1 about here

A total of 10 focus groups were conducted that represented the following grade groupings, elementary (n=4), middle (n=3), and high school (n=3). Within each grade level, separate focus groups were conducted for general education, special education, and gifted teachers. At the elementary level, a focus group interview of Chapter one teachers was also conducted.

Measure: Focus Group Interview

Two pilot focus groups were conducted prior to the implementation of the focus groups reported in this study to develop, field test, and revise questions and focus group procedures. Questions used for the ten focus groups for this study were: (a) Tell me what you know about inclusion, (b) What factors do you see as possible facilitators or barriers to implementing an inclusion model, (c) What do you see as an ideal model for inclusion, and (d) What questions should researchers be asking when examining the effects of inclusion models? Appropriate probes and follow-up questions were used to solicit a full-range of responses and to assure all teachers had an opportunity to state their point of view.

Procedures

The moderators arrived early to the interview and promoted a friendly and non-threatening environment by introducing themselves, greeting the teachers upon arrival, introducing the teachers to one another, and offering food and soft drinks to the participants. Teachers completed consent forms and viewed the list of open-ended questions that would be queried during the interview. Procedures for the effective conduct of a focus group were followed (Vaughn, Schumm, & Sinagub, in press) and included: using moderators who were trained in focus group interview procedures, assuring moderators had sufficient knowledge of the topic (inclusion), and preparing moderators to involve all participants and record key ideas. A moderator and an assistant

conducted focus groups. Moderators were graduate students or research associates who had participated in training and had observed other focus group interviews conducted by experienced moderators.

The size of the focus groups ranged from 4 to 12 with the average group size being 7.4. Teachers had adequate time to address the issues with the average focus group lasting 60 minutes with a range from 45 to 90 minutes. The focus group interviews were audio and video taped and later transcribed. Teachers were notified before the interviews that the taped transcriptions would be strictly anonymous and would be destroyed once the transcriptions were completed.

Data Analysis Procedure

Qualitative data analysis procedures were used to explore participants' views and opinions regarding issues related to inclusion. The constant comparative method of analysis (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) was applied to the transcripts as a method of coding and categorizing the data, and to summarize the findings in meaningful ways. A summary of the procedures used follows and is based on those suggested by Lincoln and Guba (1985).

1. Data were unitized. A researcher read the interview transcript and identified salient bits of information or units. Units varied in size from several words to paragraphs and represented a cohesive idea or unit of thought. Units were written on individual slips of paper. Two identical unit sets were created for each interview.

2. Researcher pairs then independently sorted these units into categories consisting of units that were similar in content. Categories were named, and rules established for belonging to the category. Upon completion of the sorting, categories were reviewed for exhaustiveness and completeness and to ensure consistency with the rules.

3. The researcher pairs met to negotiate the categories. One researcher acted as a leader, announcing his/her categories to his/her partner and determining if the other researcher had a similar category. The pair then discussed the category and the rules for categorization, revising the rule if necessary, and determining whether each of their units belonged in this category. This process continued until all categories were exhausted.

4. Categories were reviewed. Miscellaneous units were either placed in an appropriate category or judged irrelevant and discarded. Finally, the category set was reviewed for interrelationships among categories, overlaps and completeness. Categories were subdivided or collapsed as required during this process.

Results

Teachers' Feelings About Inclusion

The most consistent response of teachers across all of the focus groups was strong feelings about inclusion, largely negative. These teachers felt passionate about the issue of inclusion and were deeply concerned about the implications for

their profession.

Several teachers commented that imposed inclusion would be enough to get them to change jobs. One elementary teacher described her discontent with inclusion by identifying her husband's reaction. He said, "You're not going to get as upset about this as you are about abortion, are you?" An elementary teacher of the gifted said, "It would be just totally ridiculous. Utterly foolish."

Many of the teachers expressed skepticism about its likely success. The expression "I don't know if it's going to work," or "I don't see how it will work," occurred across focus groups. A high school, general education teacher consulted with others and said the following, "I spoke to some other teachers and they do not see it at all. In fact, I spoke to a few and they don't think it's a good idea."

A middle school teacher of the gifted emphasized the importance of having teachers volunteer to participate in inclusion programs. "If you try to cram it down their throat, most of our faculty would just say 'No way, not on your life. I would rather pump gas.'" One middle school teacher of the gifted said, "They will be sorry they got rid of grouping just like phonics."

Teachers also felt that they needed to stand up for themselves or they would be taken advantage of with respect to this issue. An elementary special education teacher stated, "The point is we need to stand up for what we believe in and take a

stand, otherwise it will just be done without our say." An elementary education teacher expressed the following. "Why aren't we stronger in that we can't have a say in what goes on, if we are the professionals? In other words, are we hired hands being told what to do?" Several high school teachers were hard pressed to provide a rationale for inclusion. Many of them asked, "Why, why include these kids?"

Teachers' fears. The feelings on the part of teachers were often expressed as fears that included: concern for the academic success of general and special education students, concern about lawsuits, fears about workload, and just general fears about how inclusion might be translated at the local level and what this would mean with respect to their roles. While a few teachers were optimistic about the outcome of inclusion, many expressed grave concerns.

Many teachers expressed concern about the safety of students. An elementary special education teacher said, "One kindergarten teacher told me that last year she had a spina bifida child and two autistic-like, and when the fire drill went off she had to take the two autistic children by the hand and carry the spina bifida and hope that her 28 kindergarten children followed her. The biggest fear she had was safety." Another elementary special education teacher said, "I'm afraid, I hate to say it, but I'm afraid something bad is going to happen before they realize they are pushing too fast and too hard." A third elementary special education teacher put it this way. "It's

going to take some horrendous situation, like a kid having a seizure in a classroom and the teacher not knowing what to do and a child, God forbid, dying."

Many teachers expressed fears that something would happen to other children in the classroom or the child with disabilities and that they would either be sued or in some way be held responsible. An elementary education teacher stated it like this, "God forbid something would happen to that child (the student with disabilities) and believe me, it would be no one else's fault but mine because that's what the parents would bring it down on. I think it's so unrealistic, if it happens, and it probably will happen." Another elementary teacher put it this way, "Last year I had a child who was legally blind. But I was nervous half of the time, especially with the little blind one. Every time we came to a step, somebody had to be there to make sure she didn't fall down the step. And those kinds of things you start to worry about, you know, what happens if this kid falls down a step on a field trip?"

Lashing Out at Decision-Makers

Related to teachers' strong feelings about inclusion were their emotional responses to the people they perceived as responsible for educational decisions such as inclusion. They described these groups, administrators, policy makers, and university personnel, as "out of touch" with what is going on in schools. People whose ideas work "in theory but not in practice."

Unaware administrators. Many teachers felt was probable that school administrators are unaware of inclusion or are unlikely to consider their interests when establishing policies for inclusion. An elementary special education teacher said, "I bet you could do a little survey with the administrators and find out they don't have any idea what's going on..." Another special education teacher said, "There are administrators that haven't been told anything that may be coming down the pike and all of a sudden they are going to say to me, 'You are going to have to do it now,' and she [the principal] really doesn't know anything about it."

Who decides this? Many teachers' comments sounded as though they felt they had no power or control and that they just waited for the next wave of bad news to come to their classroom. An elementary teacher said, "If they're going to listen to the people who know, which they don't, they should listen to the teachers, but they won't. They'll listen to the people who sit on high chairs above the rest of us." An elementary teacher expressed this point of view. "What I'm saying is that they [administrators] sit up there and make the rules and never have to really deal with it." A high school teacher provided the following advice to administrators. "Maybe they ought to make them come and teach classes once in a while, like a year or two and then let's see what their decisions are." Many teachers thought decisions about inclusion are made by the wrong people who do not fully understand the implications of their decisions.

Teachers' views could be summarized as follows: inclusion is promoted by people who don't work in classrooms and who are unaware of the procedures and consequences of implementing practices they establish.

Understanding Inclusion

Teachers' responses to "what is inclusion" varied widely and included responses that reflected little or no understanding of inclusion to those that suggested high familiarity with the notion of inclusion. Several teachers were concerned that they were uninformed about inclusion. One elementary teacher said, "It's very depressing because I feel like I should know about this before my neighbor asks me, 'Oh, you're a teacher. What do you think about inclusion,' or a parent. I mean, don't you feel so uninformed?"

Define inclusion and teachers' roles. Perhaps the most frequently mentioned issue about inclusion was the need for a definition that was concrete and could be operationalized. Many teachers were fearful of inclusion because they didn't feel like they understood what it was and felt some pressure that it might be something they would be asked to do in the near future. A high school special education teacher expressed her frustration with the lack of concrete information about inclusion. "I think they need to come up with a definition. Somebody needs to decide what it is and to tell everybody what they think it is." Several elementary special education teachers identified the importance of having a common understanding of inclusion, "We need a

committee and we need a definition and then we can fight it out or go along with it, but without a definition there's nothing." Another said, "I think there's an awful lot of reaction to a word where nobody knows what the word means. No one has a definition. Maybe we're doing it already."

A primary need expressed by teachers was for a more explicit understanding of the teachers' roles and expectations in inclusion models. An elementary special education teacher said, "Teachers are going to want to know what are my roles, what are your roles as the exceptional special education teacher? You're going to want it in black and white..."

Isn't it mainstreaming? Many teachers of all subjects and grade levels agree with an elementary Chapter one teacher who stated, "It's just another word for mainstreaming" and a middle school teacher who said, "Isn't it just mainstreaming for a longer period of time?"

Removal of label. Many teachers felt that the key component of inclusion was the removal of the labeling process which would lead to positive outcomes in terms of acceptance. A high school special education teacher said, "Inclusion is to do away with the label and the stigmatization aspect." One high school teacher of the gifted thought that it was important that we consider the type of disability when we consider inclusion. "I think you have to identify what type of special education and then talk about inclusion about that type."

Parent involvement. Many teachers described parent involvement or their perception of lack of involvement as a major inhibitor to successful inclusion. One middle school teacher said, "It is difficult to actually get the parent to commit themselves to their child's education."

Funding. Many teachers felt that money was an impetus behind inclusion and also a barrier to its success. A middle school special education teacher said, "But face it realistically, if you take away all of your idealism, what inclusion can be is a way to take the system's dollars by decreasing the number of exceptional ed. [education] teachers and say, 'Now we have an inclusion model.'" A middle school special education teacher said, "Funding is a major barrier. You feel like you're constantly fighting for more money." A middle school special education teacher said, "It would eliminate from the government special funding for special ed. that they have lots of problems with."

Accountability. Teachers felt that inclusion would bring the barrier of additional paperwork and accountability. A middle school special education teacher said, "Too many kids, too much paperwork, and then we get so caught up because we're accountable and we are not meeting our goals or our objectives and then we're eventually going to get into trouble."

Adequate facilities. Several teachers mentioned that the facilities of the school were inadequate, particularly for students with physical disabilities. An elementary special

education teacher said, "The physical facilities will have to be equipped for handicapping conditions."

Evaluation/grades/diplomas. Many teachers, particularly at the middle and high school level, mentioned their concern about how things would be standardized for students with disabilities in general education classrooms. These concerns included how students would be evaluated, how grades would be given, what would happen on tests, and what would occur if students were unable to meet performance objectives.

Team teaching. Many teachers expressed considerations about the effectiveness of team teaching with special and general educators. They believed that it could work, but there would be many opportunities for clashes. Issues such as differences in instructional content philosophical orientations, and personality of the teacher were mentioned as factors that would influence the interaction between general education and specialist teachers.

Singled out. Many teachers chose the two words "singled out" to describe one of the potential hazards of inclusion. They felt that students with disabilities would stand out in the general education classroom and that it would be embarrassing for them. They would be worse off in general education classrooms because of this "singling out."

An elementary education teacher was puzzled about how inclusion would promote acceptance of students with severe disabilities. Her comment was, "It doesn't make any sense to me because you're including the kid, but you're still singling him

out if you have another person sitting with that child all day. That's still making him different from the rest of the group. He's included, his physical body is there, but if you need a nurse or an aide one on one with the child, isn't that singling the child out in the same way as taking him to another room?"

Ingredients for Successful Inclusion

Two topics were frequently identified by teachers as necessary if inclusion were to be successful; communication among teachers and use of cooperative grouping.

Communication. Many teachers identified communication as an important ingredient to successful inclusion. A middle school special education teacher said, "When you do more on the model of the mainstreamed, you've got to have a good team that could really work well together and find the time to follow-up with the child." Importance of communication was affirmed by a second middle school special education teacher. "Communication between teachers, clinicians, and therapists is essential. There needs to be consistency and open lines of communication."

Cooperative learning. Many teachers identified cooperative learning or peer tutoring as a possible strategy for successful inclusion. Although this was a frequently mentioned practice, many of these same teachers, as well as other teachers, were concerned about the effects of using average and high achieving kids as co-teachers. They expressed concern about how much average- and high-achieving students benefitted from these roles.

Needs of All Students

Teachers expressed concerns about the extent to which inclusion would interfere with the academic learning of both students with disabilities as well as general education students.

Needs of students with disabilities. Many teachers recognized that inclusion could potentially deny the educational needs of students with disabilities. An elementary teacher of the gifted stated, "They [parents] have the right to have their child's needs met regardless of the expense or difficult situation. Now they're going to change that. They're going to take this away."

One high school special education teacher reflected the concerns of many teachers when she predicted the practice that moght occur in many general education classrooms; the included student would be there, but would not learn much. "Many students in regular classrooms are okay as long as they're not behavior problems... Some teachers could care less about what they learn."

Another high school special education teacher recognized that while the students may be placed in general education classrooms, it is not possible for the general education teacher to provide adequate support. "You know they need your support emotionally and I think that in a regular classroom with 30 or 40 other kids, that would be impossible to do."

Needs of general education students. Many teachers express concerns about whether or not inclusion would be beneficial for general education students. A middle school special education

teacher put it this way, "But in the regular classroom, there are EH [emotionally handicapped] kids who act up and take the teachers' time. They [the regular students] start getting very resentful of that."

Concern for equity was also expressed by an elementary teacher of the gifted. "One child is having to be included because somebody thinks it's a super idea and 34 others have to wait until he's attended to, handled, whatever. So what's the equity for the regular child?" An elementary education teacher stated, "I would agree that some children would benefit from inclusion, but what about the children who are being infringed upon everyday because this child is a constant disruption in the class? I'm thinking about the other 29 children in there right now."

High school teachers frequently identified concerns about equity for general education students if students with disabilities were placed in the classroom. One high school teacher said, "I see this as a disservice to the regular student and the special student." A high school teacher of the gifted put it this way, "If any student acts up, that takes away from the environment or the opportunity for other students to learn." Another high school gifted teacher said, "I had a student who was out of control in my class. He would throw pencils and curse. He would bite kids. I was spending about 40% of my entire day teaching one child, making sure that he did not harm himself or someone else. Now this is an injustice to the rest of the

class."

A middle school teacher provided this advice about attending to the needs of all students. "People want to make categories and they want to make blanket statements and say we have to include everyone or we don't include anyone. There are individual cases that need to be looked at because certain fit in and other students don't and you have to deal with each case individually." Many middle school teachers assumed this point of view. They asked the following question, "What's effective for the student? What really helps the student? That's what we need to know." A middle school teacher of the gifted reflected the opinion of many teachers when she said, "We need to take a step back and look at how it's going to affect all the kids in the school. How it's going to affect the gifted students, the average students, the LD (learning disabled) students."

Preparing Teachers to Work in Inclusive Schools

Many general and special education teachers were concerned that general education teachers are not adequately prepared to meet the needs of students with disabilities in general education classrooms. A middle school special education teacher said, "You know that there are many teachers who do not have any training in dealing with these children..." Many teachers felt that adequate preparation was essential. An elementary special education teacher said, "Number one, if this is the way it's going to be, it has to start at the undergraduate level... The regular classroom teacher is going to have to take many courses in

special education."

A Chapter one teacher experienced, first-hand, the consequences of lack of preparation for working with students with disabilities. Her comments were, "Because I was put in a classroom my first year, I did not know a single thing about special education and I had a very low LD student and I did not know what to do with him. I cheated him that year, his fifth grade year, and I felt terrible about it. I still feel terrible about it and it's been a long time and I don't think this should happen. Teachers need to be trained before they get students like this."

Another high school teacher asserted that the only solution is preparing teachers to be double majors. "So, every single one of the teachers coming into the field, if you want this, is going to have to be a special education teacher and a content teacher. It's not going to work."

Perceived Parental Concerns

Many teachers anticipated that parents of students with disabilities would not view inclusion favorably. A middle school special education teacher said, "Parents are going to say, 'I want my child where they are doing well with their special teacher in that small class. I don't want him in a class of 30 and I don't really care if he suffers a little bit from being away from the kids because I know he's going to be learning.'" Two other special education teachers felt that parents would be concerned that their child's educational needs would not be met

in the general education classroom and the child would be "lost" again in the educational system much as they were prior to being identified for special education services. "I think parents have a fear that the child's going to get lost again and they've already had the trauma of identifying the child, getting special help, and what am I going to do if my child gets lost again?" Another special education teacher expressed it this way. "I feel the parents, because many of them have fought very hard and been through a lot getting their children in special classrooms where their needs are being met and I think they are going to be resistant." An elementary teacher took the point of view of a parent. "If I were a parent of one of these children, I would be furious. I would not want my child in the classroom with a teacher who was not trained to help my child."

Benefits of Inclusion

Despite most teachers' fears and concerns about the likely success of inclusion, several teachers had experiences that suggested inclusion could be positive and/or were hopeful about the likely success of inclusion. A middle school special education teacher expressed her views. "I have too many, especially at this level, that want to look alike, think alike, dress alike, etc. I mean the kids beg me, for example, if we have an assembly not to walk in the same door they did because I was strictly identified as an LD teacher..." A second middle school special education teacher expressed it this way. "Some of the regular students were able to help with the special education

student. I think that's beneficial for both the special ed. and the regular ed. student."

Many teachers foresaw or experienced benefits of inclusion. An elementary special education teacher said, "It has always been my contention that the more we can get kids into the mainstream of society, the better we are preparing them for the mainstream as a whole later in life and that was always my thought." A high school teacher of the gifted saw the social inclusion of students with disabilities as valuable. "I think it's good that they are not in totally different schools, you know, for social purposes. I mean, lunch, just being there in the halls and before school and after school, sports, clubs or whatever." A high school teacher of the gifted said, "I think the assumption is that separateness leads to low self-esteem and creates a vicious cycle in terms of the problems of special education children, and maybe there's something to this."

Discussion

The purpose of this paper was to summarize the views of general education, special education, Chapter one, and gifted teachers on inclusion. Through focus group interviews, teachers were encouraged to express their points of view and they did. Difficult to capture in print is the strength of these teachers' feelings about inclusion - feeling left out of the decision making, concern for the academic and social progress of all students, and discouragement with the role in inclusion they may be asked to play. Passionate responses from teachers occurred

across all focus groups and teacher types (e.g., Chapter one).

Are these responses a "bell ringer" for the likely reaction of teachers toward inclusion if implemented on a widespread basis (across all schools, with all students and teachers), or are they the reaction of a subgroup of teachers who have not experienced the positive aspects of inclusion? Our interpretation is that both are true. First, these teachers are gravely concerned about the implications of inclusion. Yes, they are concerned for themselves in that they fear they will not be prepared or provided adequate resources to appropriately instruct all students in inclusive classrooms. However, it was more than that. They were deeply worried that both the educational and social needs of students with and without disabilities would not be able to be met in general education classrooms despite the best efforts of teachers and the good intentions of those who have advocated for such programs. These teachers feel stretched to meet the diverse learning needs of the students in their classrooms and feel that they are not doing enough. With inclusion comes the demand to meet the needs of students with disabilities and to potentially co-teach and co-plan with other educational specialists. They simply feel that even if they were better trained, it is more than they can be expected to do successfully.

Second, many of these teachers have not experienced first-hand the potential positive aspects of inclusion, nor have they been involved in inclusion models that provided adequate support

programs for teachers. Therefore, their reactions should be viewed from this perspective as well. Our research in this same school district with an unrelated project has exposed us to general and special education elementary teachers who have volunteered to co-teach in inclusion classrooms with high incidence disabilities who have very different feelings about the effectiveness of inclusion. They feel that many students with disabilities make social and academic progress in inclusive programs and are an asset to their classroom.

We are aware that the purposive sampling procedures used in this study raise questions regarding the extent to which the comments from these teachers are generalizable. While focus group interviews are a frequently endorsed method for obtaining the opinions and perceptions of key stakeholders on a relatively explored topic such as inclusion, the validity and generalizability of the findings from focus gorup interviews have been questioned ( ). We have structured this study to increase generalizability and validity through the application of best practices (Krueger, 1988; .....) that include: a) conduct of multiple focus groups until the results become redundant, b) use of consistent procedures across focus groups, c) complete transcription of the audio tapes with themes identified and verified across data sources, and d).....

Furthermore, the urban area in which this study was conducted has a high percentage of students whose first language is other than English (35%), thus these teachers are already

exposed to a wide range of diverse learning needs in their classrooms. Nevertheless, increases in the academic, social, cultural, and linguistic diversity of students is the norm for most urban schools and many suburban and rural districts as well. Even if these teachers' voices only represent a subgroup of teachers, their concerns provide advanced knowledge of what needs to be considered when implementing inclusion practices in schools.

From these teachers' views, we've identified the following guidelines for implementing school based inclusion models: (a) Inform teachers, parents, and other personnel as to what inclusion is and is not, (b) Define teachers' roles and responsibilities within inclusion models, (c) Provide a rationale for the implementation of inclusion and data that demonstrates its likely success for students with and without disabilities, (d) Identify resources and support services that are available to teachers participating in inclusion models, (e) Reduce class size in inclusion classrooms, (f) Provide adequate teacher preparation and consulting support so teachers do not feel they are "on their own", and (g) Let teachers volunteer to participate in inclusion programs. We are hopeful that schools that adhere to these teacher-expressed guidelines will eliminate responses from participating teachers such as, "I'd rather pump gas."

Table I

Background Information for District Instructional Personnel

Category	Elementary				Middle			High		
	Chapter 1	Spec ed.	Gifted	Regular	Regular	Spec ed.	Gifted	Regular	Spec ed.	Gifted
Gender										
Male	0	1	0	1	3	2	2	3	1	1
Female	7	3	5	8	9	9	4	1	10	3
Unreported	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Highest degree held										
Bachelor	5	0	1	3	1	6	1	1	6	2
Master	2	3	4	6	10	3	4	2	2	1
Specialist	1	1	0	0	0	1	0	1	1	0
Doctor	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	1
Unreported	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	2	0
Ethnicity										
Black/Person of color	2	0	0	1	3	1	0	0	0	0
Caucasian/Non-Hispanic	2	4	4	4	5	4	3	2	6	2
Caucasian/Hispanic	3	0	1	4	3	5	3	2	4	2
Other	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0
Unreported	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0
Years of teaching experience										
1 to 5	3	0	1	1	0	4	0	0	1	1
6 to 10	0	0	1	7	4	2	2	1	4	0
11 to 15	3	0	0	1	5	3	1	0	2	1
16 to 20	1	1	1	0	2	2	0	3	2	1
21+	0	3	2	0	1	0	3	0	0	1
Unreported	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0
None (training)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0

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